

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the entire section entitled: "DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT" with the following rewritten paragraphs:

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The opening lever 1 is disposed in a handle recess 2 at an inside of a vehicle door 15 for mechanically unlocking the latter and is mounted on the vehicle door 15 in a known manner by means of a firmly connected pivot pin 3. The pivot pin 3 extends perpendicularly from an underside 4 of the handle recess 2 to a top side 5 of the handle recess 2. A switch 6, which is secured to the underside 4 of the handle recess 2, is associated with the pivot pin 3 in a rotationally rigid manner. The switch 6 is electrically connected to a central locking system. The switch 6 can, of course, be provided at any vehicle door. In the represented embodiment, the switch 6 is associated with a driver's door 15 of the vehicle, so that only the operation of this door 15 is described in the following.

The switch 6 is coupled to the pivot pin 3 of the opening lever 1 such that it causes the vehicle door 15 to be locked or unlocked when the opening lever 1 is moved out of an inoperative position 7 into a first switched position 8, in which the switch 6 generates a signal for locking or unlocking the central locking system and therefore the vehicle door 15, the opening lever 1 automatically returning from the first switched position 8 to its inoperative position 7 when released, and a locking or unlocking state of the central locking system being maintained until the opening lever 1 is again pivoted into the first switched position 8 (Figure 2).

In order to reach the first switched position 8, in which the central locking system is locked or unlocked, according to the previous state of the central locking system, the opening lever 1 is pushed manually toward the outside of the driver's door 15, into the handle recess 2. In order to enter the vehicle, the vehicle doors are first unlocked by means of the central locking system, whereupon the driver's door 15 can be opened with an operating element disposed at its outside. Once the driver has

entered, the driver's door 15 is closed and is in the unlocked state. If the driver now wishes to lock the driver's door 15 or all the doors of the vehicle, the driver only has to move the opening lever 1 into the first switched position 8 by pushing the opening lever 1 towards the outside of the driver's door 15. As a result, the pivot pin 3 is rotated in the direction of the arrow 9 and the switch 6 accordingly actuated. A signal which causes the central locking system to lock the driver's door 15 is therefore generated by the switch 6. After the opening lever 1 has been released, it returns, in particular in spring-actuated fashion, to its inoperative position 7, i.e., a neutral position, and the locking state is maintained. If the opening lever 1 is again pivoted into the first switched position 8, a signal is again generated, this signal causing the central locking system to unlock the driver's door 15. It is therefore possible, by operating the opening lever 1, to lock or unlock the driver's door 15 or the vehicle doors, as desired at the time, by means of the central locking system.

A further function of the opening lever 1 is to mechanically open the driver's door. For this purpose, the opening lever 1 is shifted from the inoperative position 7 into an opening position 11 which is reached by pivoting the opening lever 1 in the direction of the passenger compartment. The pivot pin 3 is in the process rotated in the direction of the arrow 12. In order for the driver's door 15, which may be in a state in which it is locked by the central locking system, to be firstly unlocked by the central locking system, when the opening lever 1 is changed over from the inoperative position 7 to the opening position 11, it passes through a second switched position 13 of the switch 6 (Figure 2), in which the switch 6 generates a signal which causes the central locking system to unlock the driver's door 15. This takes place before the opening position 11 is reached. The mechanical opening of the driver's door 15 then comes into play when the opening position 11 is reached.